

Stockton Record

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STOCKTON - Kathleen Solari is known in Lincoln Unified as one of the leaders of the school district's movement to save science camp. Before that, she gave her time to work as a trustee at The Haggin Museum and was president of a women's organization that performs community service.

In short, volunteerism has been a big part of the 48-year-old Solari's life for many years.

"It's just fulfilling," said Solari, an accountant. "I feel very fortunate in my life. I just like helping other people. I think everybody deserves a chance. It's a good feeling."

Volunteerism is appreciated 12 months a year, but Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which is Monday, has become for many an annual time for service.

"It doesn't always take money to contribute to our community," said Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Pleasanton, who will spend much of January participating in volunteer efforts in his congressional district in recognition of King. "Just taking a few hours to lend a hand in your neighborhood benefits you, your family and friends."

Solari's cause the past four years and into the future has been to ensure that all Lincoln Unified sixth-graders have the opportunity to attend science camp.

For many years, Lincoln Unified subsidized those students who couldn't afford to pay the \$260 to attend science camp. But that subsidy disappeared beginning in the 2009-10 school year because of California's financial woes.

This could have meant that numerous Lincoln Unified students wouldn't have been able to afford science camp.

More than half of the district's 8,900 students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, a key indicator of financial need.

The first year Solari and then-Brookside Elementary Principal Maureen Oechel led fund-raising efforts, they collected \$90,000 in just a few months.

At the time, Solari's son, Dominic, was in the sixth grade. He would not have been able to attend science camp because of Lincoln Unified's policy that if all students cannot afford to attend, then none can go.

But Solari has continued her efforts, which can range from five minutes to several hours a day, even though she no longer has a personal stake.

"It's important to see other kids benefit," she said. "For a lot of the kids who go, it's the first time they've ever seen the beach, ever seen the ocean, ever been away from home. This was never about my child. It was always about the kid down the street, the kid around the corner."